

Tri-Town Harvester Weed Out Local Ponds

By AMY ROLLINS

Duxbury has acquired a new weapon in its battle against weed overgrowth in area ponds.

Sharing with neighbors Hanson and Pembroke, Duxbury received a state grant to purchase a \$100,000-plus weed harvester to combat overgrowth in area ponds.

"It's a large machine that goes through the pond, and cuts and collects the overgrown exotic and invasive plant life," said Conservation Agent Joe Grady. "These machines are very popular and are used worldwide to maintain pond habitats."

Grady said officials in the three towns are currently investigating other lakes and ponds that the machine can be used in. "It looks like the only Duxbury pond we'll use it in will be Island Creek," he said. "It's not for every pond, but it is the preferred method at Island Creek; the pond is deep enough and the machine will really work well." Island Creek is the only naturally occurring pond in town and feeds a canal system that supplies 5 cranberry bogs with water.

The machine will comb through the pond and gather the abundant weeds. Grady said the collected weeds will either line the banks of the pond or be put in a truck and carried to a gravel pit in town which needs some organic material. Grady estimated that Duxbury would need the machine to weed har-

vest Island Creek for about 10 days each summer.

Secretary of the Island Creek Association Sue Mangione said she and her group have noticed the weeds to be a big problem in the last six years.

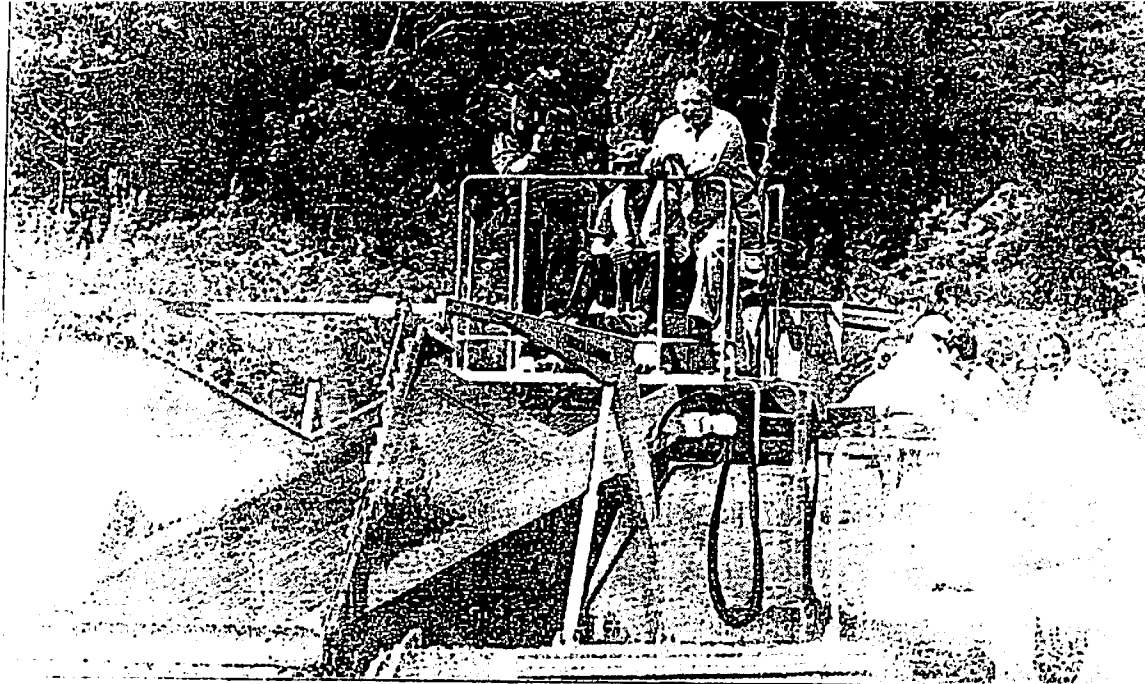
"The town used to have a lot of lessons here, and a lot of canoes, but until the machine came, we couldn't even pull out the weeds," she said. "I'm thrilled that this is finally happening."

Grady said creation of the machine was a local representative Marini who attended town meetings on pond problems in his district. According to Grady, Marini strongly advocated the awarding of the grant to share among these three towns.

Over the past seven years, Duxbury has been harvesting weeds in Island Creek. Grady says the town has spent approximately \$15,000 a year to rent a machine to perform the weeding. With their own machine, Grady said, Duxbury hopes to recoup the cost of the machine in a few years.

The official unveiling of the machine occurred at a town conference Monday afternoon where Representative Marini spoke with town residents and officials. "I think this is an excellent example of community spirit and of democracy in action."

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Rep. Fran Marini enjoyed a ride on the new \$100,000 Weed Harvester on Island Creek Pond Monday. Town Manager Rocco Longo and Conservation Agent Joe Grady also rode on the machine to be shared between Duxbury, Hanson and Pembroke.

Photo by Amy Rollins

Weed Harvester to Mow Ponds

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tion," he said. "By sharing this machine we are saving the towns a lot of money. There are various ways to eliminate the aquatic overgrowth including chemical treatment, dredging and matting. The matting and the chemicals are both very unnatural and unpopular and the dredging for a small pond like this would cost about 1 million dollars."

Marini also said the reduced

weed growth would be an improvement in public safety, especially in light of several pond drownings in surrounding towns.

Training sessions to operate the machine have been offered to members of the Department of Public Works, Land and Natural Resources and the Conservation Commission. According to Hanson Selectman Daniel Webster, Duxbury's example of training a DPW employee to operate the harvester

bodes well for the other two towns. "At first we thought we'd have to hire a separate employee, who would be under contract for all three towns," he said. "But they tell me that the machine is not as difficult to operate as we first thought, and I am going to encourage our highway department director to train one of his employees."

The harvester will be stored in Duxbury, Marini said, and will be transferred from town to town on a special trailer.

"Duxbury has really done all the leg work in this project," said Grady. "We've hired a company to help develop specifications for this machine. We've been involved with pond management for over ten years in Duxbury, and it made sense for us to take the ball."

Grady said the water is habitually tested at Island Creek and is swimmable and fishable. "The weed harvesting will only help the habitat," he said. "When the water is choked with weeds its not a good environment for fish, the plants or people."